

Firefighters Try Out Powerful Equipment

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GREENWICH TWP. -- The piece of fire fighting equipment demonstrated Monday has the ability to spray 5,000 gallons of water per minute and can hit a target 500 feet away.

With the pumping power of 10 fire trucks, the large-flow firefighting system will now be part of South Jersey's fight against terrorism, serving in case of any disastrous blaze.

Ten months after announcing a plan to purchase the apparatus for South Jersey, officials converged on the former DuPont Repauno Plant here to demonstrate its capabilities.

"We're about making the state stronger and better prepared," said Richard Cañas, director of New Jersey's Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness.

The system is designed to fight large petrochemical fires, but can assist in a number of operations.

Officials from this region fought for funding after learning that North Jersey had two of these machines and there were none for this part of the state.

"North Jersey will always draw the attention of terrorists," said Cañas. "We've learned that all a terrorist would have to do is drive an hour and a half south, and they would have a similar situation that is less protected."

Four locations in Gloucester County are considered among the top 100 in terms of being threatened by a terrorist attack, Freeholder Director Stephen Sweeney said Monday.

The equipment, purchased for \$1.4 million with state Homeland Security and other moneys, is now available for use in Gloucester, Cumberland, Salem, Camden, Cape May and Burlington counties.

Hundreds of first responders have been trained to use the equipment, which can fight a wide range of major fires in the region.

Officials are confident they can get the pumper up and running within 45 minutes of a call.

"When you're looking at this operation, speed is not an issue," said Larry Petrillo, director of the state Office of the Fire Marshal.

Gloucester County will be the main hub for storing the equipment, which is being kept in several communities along the Delaware River.